



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools



Conducting Effective Emergency Management Tabletops, Drills and Other Exercises

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Presentation Goals

- I. Discuss why schools should conduct emergency exercises
- II. Connect exercises to the four phases of emergency management (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery)
- III. Overview of five types of emergency exercises
- IV. Discuss how to build a successful exercise design continuum
- V. Share best practices in conducting exercises
- VI. Conduct an interactive activity
- VII. Highlight exercise safety procedures
- VIII. Discuss after-action reviews
- IX. Share common exercise mistakes
- X. Provide resources for further planning

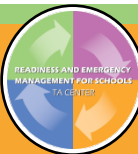




I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises

1. Clarify roles and responsibilities
2. Evaluate plans and procedures
3. Develop effective agency relationships
4. Assess resources and capabilities
5. Identify needs and solutions
6. Provides significant benefits to school and community
7. States have legislation requiring school exercises and drills

Many emergency management agencies and other accredited public safety agencies must conduct various types of exercises on an annual basis.

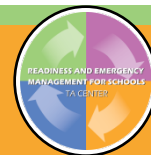




I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

The benefits are clear:

- Greater consistency of response
- More efficient use of resources
- Increased confidence in students, staff and parents
- Stronger relationships with partners

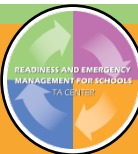
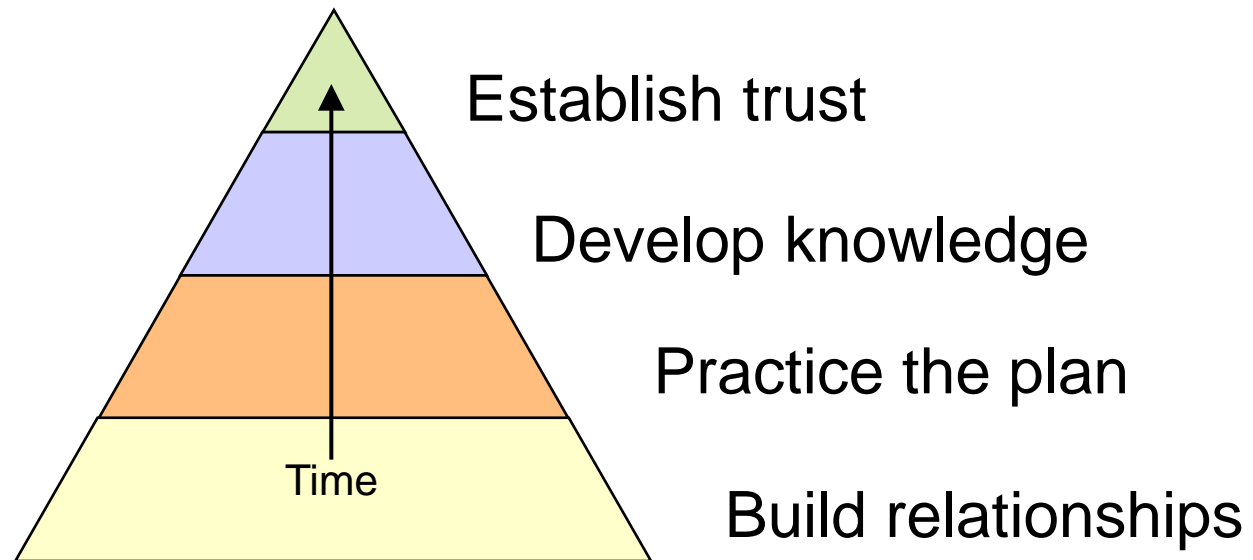




I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

A key to effective emergency response in schools is exercising the balance between flexibility and consistency that is best developed through an exercise design continuum.

Flexibility ← Good Judgment → Consistency





II. Connect Exercises to the Four Phases of Emergency Management

Exercises are a core element of the Preparedness phase of emergency management; however, an effective exercise program impacts each phase of the cycle.

Exercises:

- Point out vulnerabilities to address in the Prevention-Mitigation phase.
- Allow partners to practice a Response that can help ensure a smooth and efficient response in an actual crisis.
- Demonstrate what resources may be needed during the Recovery phase.





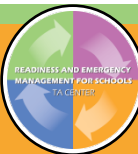
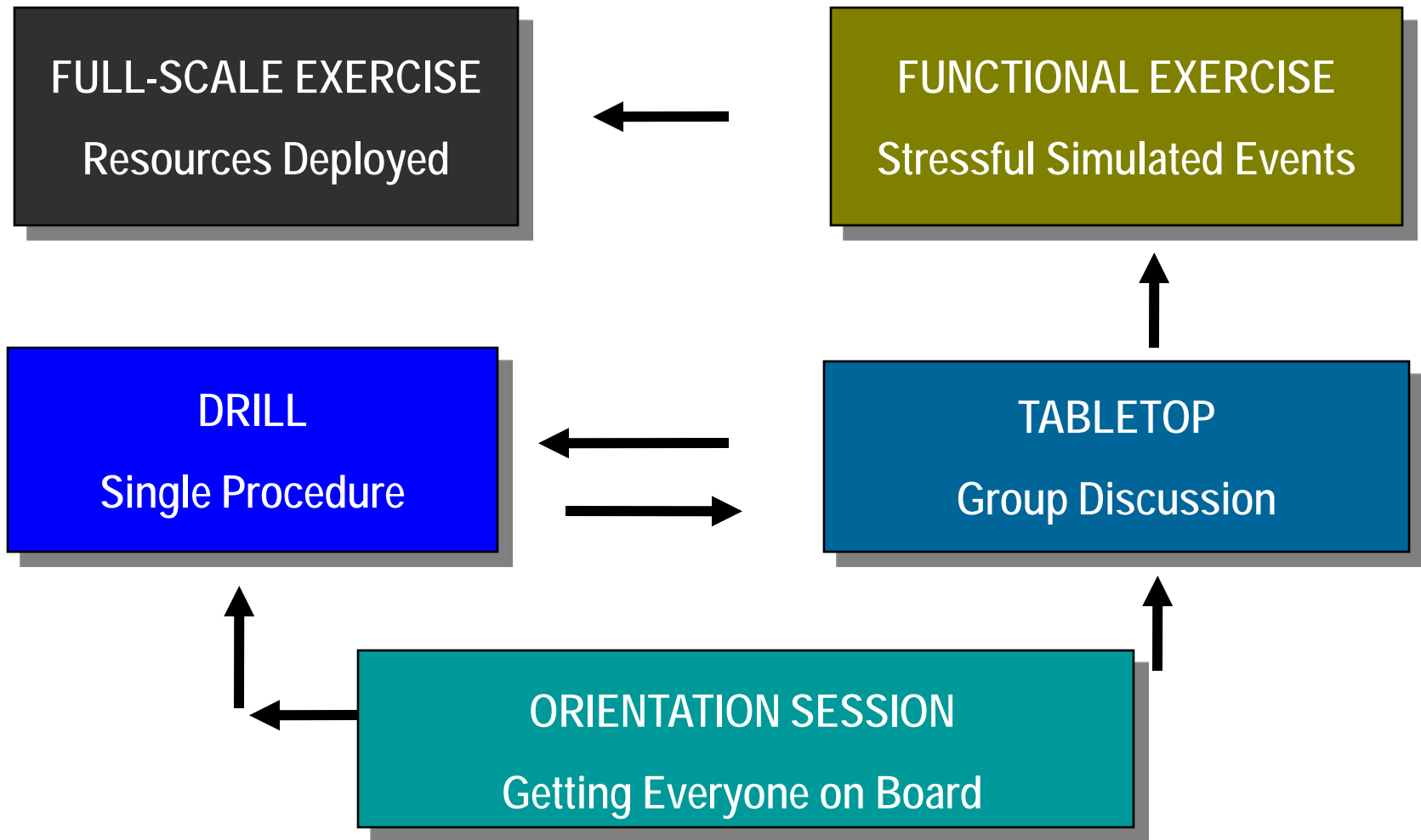
III. Types of Emergency Exercises

- 1. Orientation Sessions:** Inform about emergency operations plans and emergency procedures (*lasts one to two hours, takes two or more days to plan*)
- 2. Drills:** Perfect an individual emergency procedure (*lasts 30 min. to two hours, takes up to three days to plan*)
- 3. Tabletop Exercises:** Identify roles/responsibilities in different scenarios (*lasts one to four hours, takes one or more months to plan*)
- 4. Functional Exercises:** Roundtable simulation of emergency situation with realistic timeline (*lasts three to eight hours, takes three months to plan*)
- 5. Full-scale Exercises:** Multiagency, on-site simulation of an emergency situation; all resources deployed (*lasts multiple days, takes six or more months to plan*)





III. Types of Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

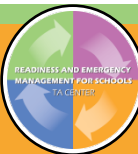




III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Orientation Session (Cont'd.)

Why hold an orientation session?

- Introduce something new (i.e., policies and plans, emergency operations center, etc.)
- Explain existing plans, procedures, and updates to stakeholders
- Introduce a *multi-event continuum* to prepare participants and stakeholders for success in more complex exercises
- Motivate people for participation in subsequent exercises
- Identify those who are critical of the need to plan for and practice emergency situations and, if appropriate, involve them
- Emphasize emergency management link to school mission, money, Annual Yearly Progress, and community responsibility





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a drill?

- To practice and perfect one small part of the response plan
- To prepare for more extensive exercises in which several functions will be coordinated and tested
- To focus on a single, relatively limited portion of the overall emergency management system
- To practice and maintain current skills
- To provide training with new equipment
- To develop new policies or procedures

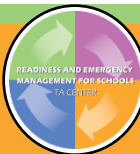




III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

Drill Considerations

- Coordinate with school and local public safety; have them observe or participate
- Follow your district or school procedures
- Make the drills realistic, but do so safely
- Test warning and notification procedures
- Block normal routes to force staff to make critical decisions
- Plan for students, staff and visitors with special needs
- Test accountability procedures (use the visitor log or other systems)
- Consider student release procedures during certain drills
- Debrief the same day with your teachers and staff





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a tabletop exercise?

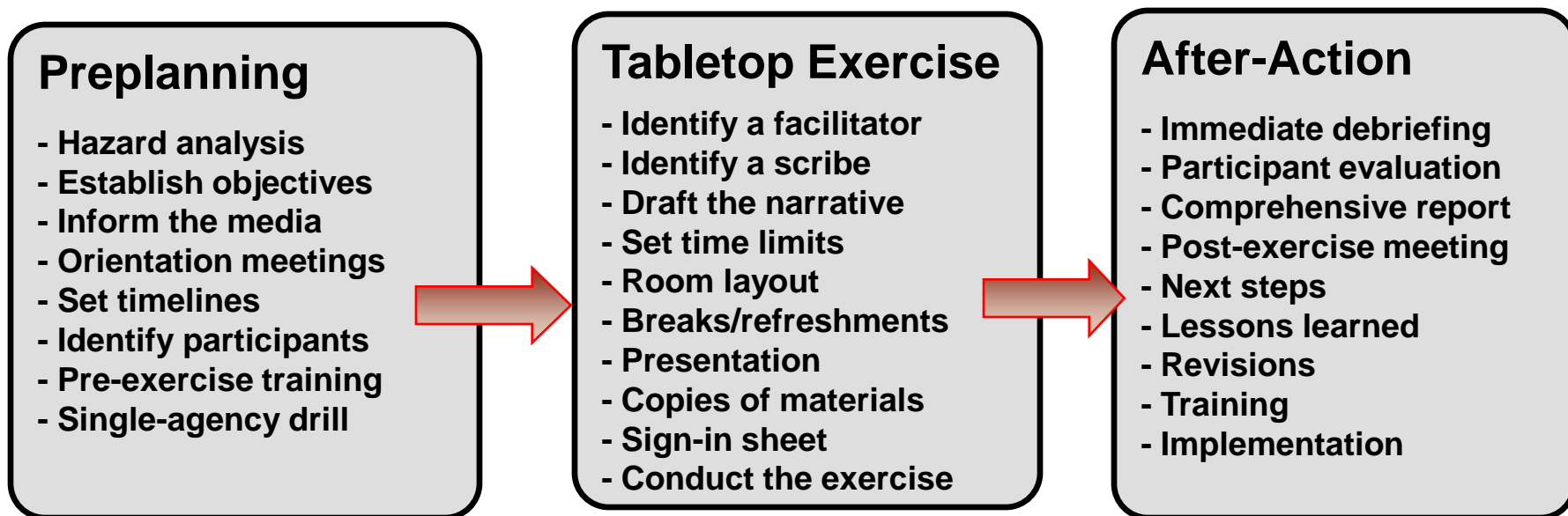
- Provides opportunity for **low-stress discussion** of coordination and policy within the school and/or between the school and other agencies
- Offers a good environment for **problem solving**
- Provides an opportunity for key agencies and stakeholders to become **acquainted** with one another, their interrelated roles, and their respective responsibilities
- Promotes good **preparation for a functional exercise**





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Example: Phases of Tabletop Development



Developing a tabletop exercise takes more than one month to plan. The event typically lasts one to four hours.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a functional exercise?

- Tests one or more functions and exercises of several agencies or departments **without incurring the costs** of a full-scale exercise
- **Tests multiple functions** of the school / district's emergency management plan
- Simulates an incident in the **most realistic manner** possible short of moving resources to an actual site
- Is **highly interactive**, moderately stressful, requires quick decision making

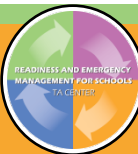




III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise (Cont'd.)

Who is involved in a functional exercise?

- **Controller:** Manages and directs the exercise
- **Players:** Respond as in a real emergency (should include policymakers; may include coordinators and operational personnel directing field activities)
- **Simulators:** Assume external roles and deliver planned messages to the players
- **Evaluators:** Assess performance through observation

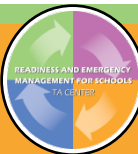




III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a full-scale exercise?

- Simulates a real event as closely as possible—the ultimate test of functions
- Evaluates the *operational* capability of emergency management systems in a highly stressful environment that simulates actual response conditions
- Activates the ICS / EOC
- Coordinates the actions of several entities
- Tests several emergency functions
- Is an excellent learning exercise
- Utilizes same personnel "roles" as functional exercise—but now includes "victims"





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

What factors are needed for a full-scale exercise?

- Needs assessment
- Design team formation
- Scope, purpose, objective definitions on paper
- Scenario development
- Controller, evaluator, player, simulator
- Master scenario events list, messages
- Materials, supplies, enhancements/props
- Evaluation form development
- Compiled media / parent information
- After-action review and then report



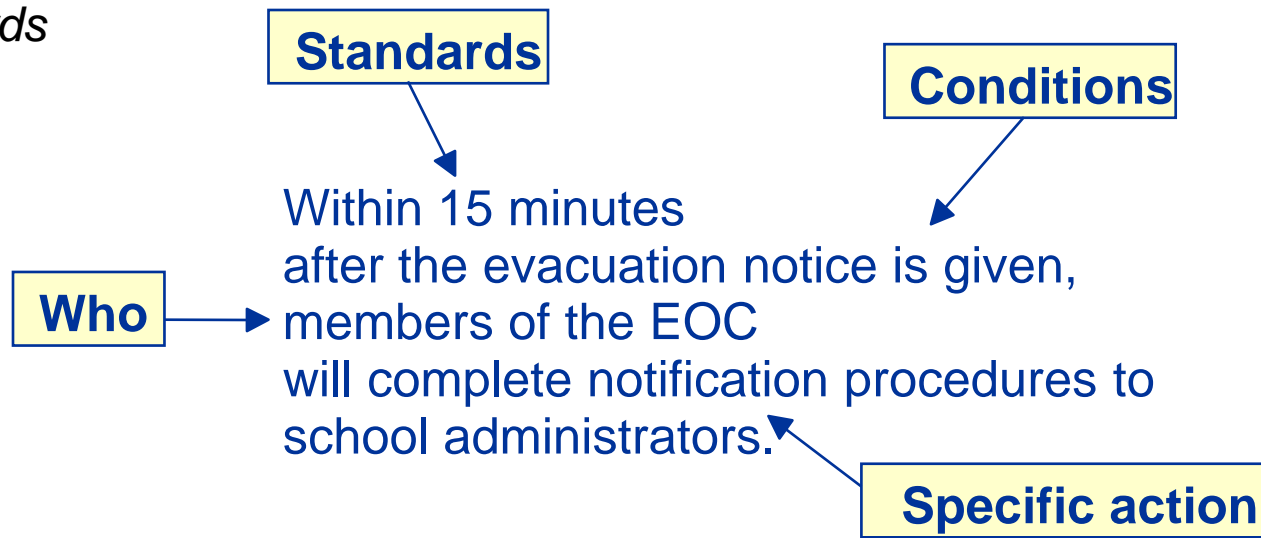


III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

For a successful full-scale exercise:

An objective is key

- Should describe performance expected from participants to demonstrate competence
- Should be clear, concise, focused on participant performance
- Should state *who* should do *what* under *what conditions* according to *what standards*





IV. Building a Successful Exercise Design Continuum

1. Based on the **needs assessment**, elect one of your school's main vulnerabilities
2. With response agencies, **set a date** six to eight months in advance for a full-scale exercise based on that vulnerability
3. Designate a **design team leader** and **exercise design team**—or ensure there is a central school liaison who is part of the *external agency* design team
4. From that date, back into an **orientation session**
5. Determine which procedures will be utilized in the full-scale exercise, then schedule a series of **drills** that separately address each one
6. After several such drills, schedule two to three **tabletops**
7. Hold a **functional exercise**
8. Execute the **full-scale exercise**
9. *Hold **after-action** reviews throughout*
10. *Implement the **evaluation** results throughout*





V. Best Practices in Conducting Exercises

- Practice a variety of:
 - different scenarios based upon risks
 - different response procedures
- Test the capacity of all agencies—not just schools.
- Communicate information in advance
 - Q: Who are the stakeholders?
- Evaluate and document lessons learned
- Implement exercise outcome recommendations.

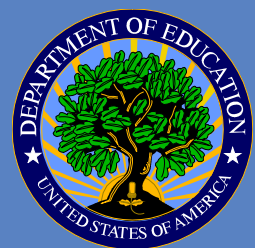




V. Best Practices in Conducting Exercises (Cont'd.)

- Implement the Incident Command System within exercises to:
 - Be compliant with the National Incident Management System
 - Better integrate with local response agencies.
- The goals of an exercise are NOT achieved UNTIL the recommendations from the after–action review are implemented.

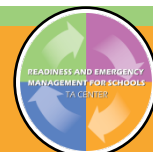




VI. Interactive Activity

Work in groups:

- Identify a high-priority vulnerability.
- Using the exercise continuum:
 - Define date, scenario, and key partners for a full scale exercise;
 - Determine procedures/functions that will be tested;
 - Create a concise purpose for the event; and
 - Map out three drills, one tabletop scenario and one functional exercise that address those functions.





VII. Exercise Safety Procedures

- Conduct a **safety briefing**
- Establish a code word to cease the exercise
- Have “non-players” identified
- Establish a check-in area
- Designate a **safety officer**
- Mark **observer/evaluator areas**
- Obtain vests for observer/evaluators
- Identify weapons cleared for exercise
- Utilize “Exercise in Progress” **signage**
- Obtain **radios** for exercise control team
- **Provide** the media and nearby neighborhoods / business with **pre- and post-event information**





VIII. After-action Review

What is an After-action Review?

- After-action reviews **capture key lessons learned** from emergency response and make recommendations for improvements.
- **Components of after-action reviews:**
 - Conduct exercise / emergency activities overview;
 - Relevance of goals and objectives;
 - Analysis of outcomes;
 - Analysis of capacity to perform critical tasks;
 - Recommendations;
 - Specific improvements for each partner; and
 - Accountability plan for follow-up.





VIII. After-action Review (Cont'd.)

Considerations for after-action reviews

- Best time for a review may not necessarily be *immediately* after the exercise is conducted
- A skilled facilitator is important
- Any tension amongst those present must be constructive

Benefits of after-action reviews

- Supports proactive response management
- Provides documentation for any future litigation
- Identifies areas for improvement





IX. Common Exercise Mistakes

- Scenarios are not unique or tailored to the local area.
- Scenarios are too complex for the Local Education Agency (LEA) to manage successfully.
- Timing of the exercise is inadequate.
- No accurate critique of the exercise afterwards.
- Safety issues are not addressed properly.
- Exercise is planned and initiated too quickly.
- Some critical agencies are not included.
- After-action items are not implemented.





X. Resources

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Exercise Development and Design Courses Online Training

- IS120a – An Introduction to Exercises
- IS130 – Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning
- IS139 – Exercise Design
- <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/>

Georgia Emergency Management Agency's (GEMA) *"Education for Disaster"* DVD

- <http://www.gema.state.ga.us>

Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

<http://www.hseep.dhs.gov/>





X. Resources (Cont'd.)

REMS Technical Assistance Center publications

- *Emergency Exercises: An Effective Way to Validate School Safety Plans*
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/Emergency_NewsletterV2I3.pdf
- *Planning and Conducting a Functional Exercise*
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/HH_EmergencyExeMarch20th.pdf





Presentation Credits

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